

From: Director, Camp Alonim JLevine@aju.edu
Subject: Important for Parents of Third Session 7th Graders
Date: July 16, 2015 at 9:24 PM
To: jlevine@aju.edu



Dear Parents of Kochavim (7th Grade) Campers,

We are so excited to welcome you to camp for Third Session!

As the new session approaches, I'm writing to you and all the parents of our Third Session 7th graders to make you aware that one of the 7th graders at Third Session will be a transgender camper. While numerous other Jewish camps have had transgender campers and staff, this will be new for us at Alonim this summer and I'm writing to ask for your support. This camper was enrolled here last year and may be familiar to some of your children as a girl, but now identifies as a boy and will be recognized as a boy. He will live with other boys his age in a boys' bunk. This bunk has individual shower stalls and toilet stalls, and we will be making additional privacy-related accommodations as needed for all campers to feel comfortable. We've also consulted with various community organizations, other camps, and our camp's social worker to discuss "best practices" for this camper and for the camp community as a whole.

Gender identity and expression are separate from biological sex and sexual orientation. This camper considers his gender to be male and identifies as male at school, at his synagogue, and even at other camps -- so that's how we will recognize him.

As you prepare your child for camp, I encourage you to revisit the "Alonim Community Expectations" form that you and your child signed and that you submitted. We've heard from numerous parents this summer about how valuable it was for them to sit down with their children before camp to talk about expectations and discuss the resources available to them at camp if they need anything. I'd like to highlight one such community expectation:

One of the things that makes us "Alonimers" is the way that we speak to and treat one another. It is each person's responsibility to treat everyone else with respect. I commit to speaking with my bunkmates and all others in the community with kindness, using appropriate language at all times, sharing with others, and speaking up if I see someone not being treated with the respect that everyone deserves.

Your kids might have questions for you. If they happen to have questions while at camp, they should direct their questions to their counselors. Questions will be responded to in an age-appropriate manner befitting the dignity of all involved. We adults should be mindful of the messages we are sending to our children about acceptance and tolerance with our behaviors, actions, and comments. It's also very helpful to keep in mind that most kids are more comfortable with this than we give them credit. They will likely be much more interested in other things happening at camp this summer.

Finally, it might interest you to know that when this child "came out" to his parents, one of his first questions to them was, "Can I still go to Camp Alonim?" He wants to come back to camp for many of the same reasons your own kids want to be here. Our answer to his question, of course, was, "Yes, you are always welcome at Alonim." Campers often talk about camp as a place they can be the best versions of themselves. We are proud to be a community camp for a diverse community of Alonimers, and we pride ourselves on doing everything we can for our campers and staff -- *all* of them -- in order to create a loving and supportive community. Each summer at Camp Alonim, we strive to be a community where all campers can have pure fun, experience the joys of Jewish living, and make friendships that will last a lifetime. We look forward to seeing that community in action when your children arrive for Third Session.

Please do not hesitate to contact me here at 877-225-6646 or jlevine@aju.edu if you have any questions or would like to discuss anything.

See you soon!

Josh Levine
Director